

VERTIGO

FABLES 80



WILLINGHAM · BUCKINGHAM · GROSS · PEPOY

Mar 09

suggested for
mature readers
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TWO MINUTES AFTER THE WOODLAND BUILDING CAME CRASHING DOWN.

OKAY, I KNOW YOU PEOPLE ARE OUT THERE.

I CAN HEAR YOU.



GRIMBLE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WE NEED TO MOVE THESE PEOPLE OUT OF HERE!

BIGBY! MOVE WHO WHERE? I CAN'T SEE A DAMNED THING IN THIS DUST CLOUD.



AND I CAN'T CATCH MY BREATH! I KEEP SPITTING OUT DIRT. I THINK ALL THIS GRIT'S GETTING INTO MY LUNGS.

:COUGH! COUGH! COUGH!:



HANG IN THERE, BUDDY. I THINK THIS IS A SITUATION WHERE MY SPECIAL TALENTS CAN HELP.

:COUGH! COUGH!:

THUMP
THUMP



THE DARK-EST HOUR

Chapter four of
THE DARK AGES

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BETTER
KEEP
MOVING.
TRY TO
CONTACT
AS MANY
PEOPLE AS
YOU CAN
BUMP
INTO.

TELL
THEM TO
HUNKER
DOWN.

IT'S
ABOUT TO GET
WINDY.

GET
DOWN,
PEOPLE!
GRAB THE
PAVEMENT
AND COVER
YOUR
HEADS!

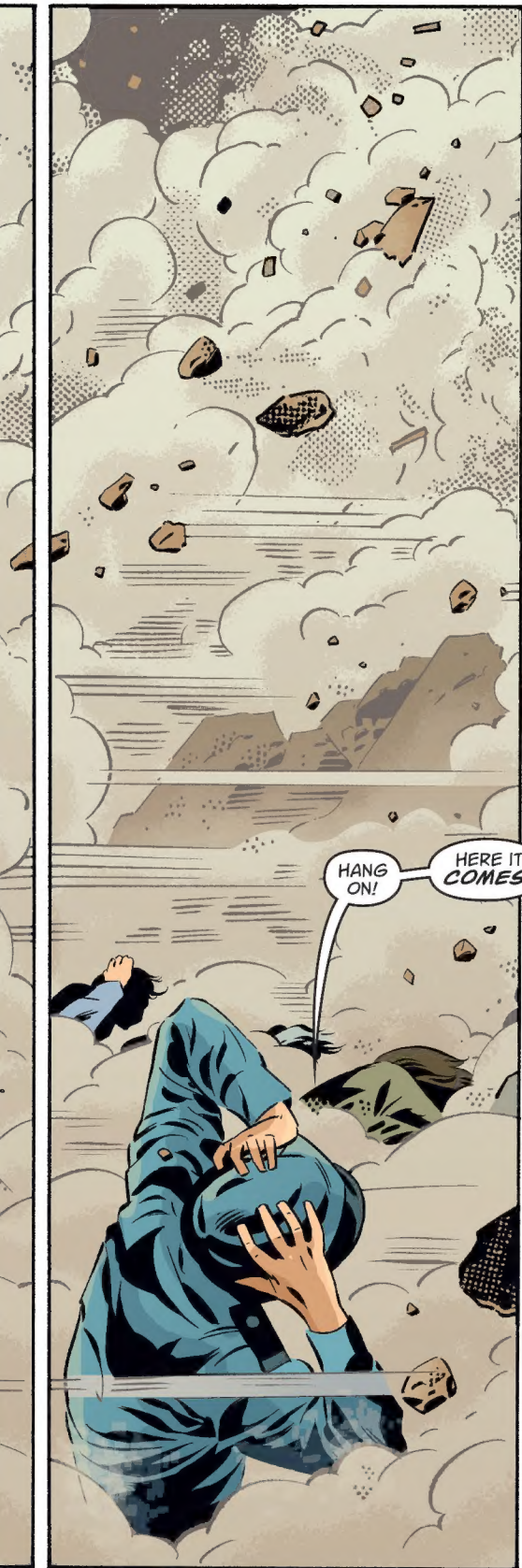
BIGBY'S
GOING TO
BLOW
THE DUST
AWAY!

OH,
PINOCCHIO,
YOU AND YOUR DAD
NEED TO DUCK AND
COVER. BIGBY'S
GOING TO--

YES, I
HEARD YOU
SHOUTING. BUT
I'M NOT ABOUT TO GET
ON MY KNEES, OUT IN THE
STREET, LIKE SOME
CRINGING, PENNILESS
BEGGAR.

SUIT
YOURSELF, OLD-
TIMER. HOPE YOU
LAND SOMEWHERE
SOFT.

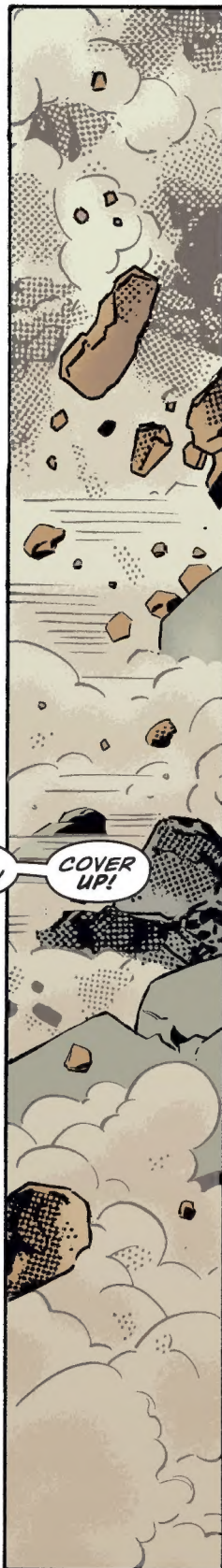
C'MON, POPS. WE
NEED TO **DO** THIS. I'VE BEEN
CLOSE TO BIGBY WHEN HE HUFFS
AND PUFFS BEFORE. YOU DON'T
WANT TO TAKE UP **FLYING**
LESSONS NOW, DO YOU?



HANG ON!

HERE IT COMES!

COVER UP!



OH, DEAR ME.
OH, MY.

IS IT OVER?

FABLETOWN?
YES, GOD HELP US ALL, I THINK FABLETOWN IS DONE.



OH, NO YOU DON'T, SIR! NO YOU DON'T!

YOU DON'T GET TO SINK INTO DESPAIR! YOU'RE OUR **MAYOR**--OUR LEADER! AND NOW IT'S TIME TO STEP UP AND **LEAD!**

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, KING COLE, WE DIDN'T ELECT YOU TO ENJOY THE PRIVILEGES OF OFFICE WHEN TIMES ARE **GOOD**, BUT TO SHOULDER THE HEAVIEST WEIGHT IN THE **BAD** TIMES!

WELL, TIMES ARE SURE **BAD NOW**, SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO **DO** ABOUT IT, SIR?

I DON'T-- I'M NOT SURE WHAT--

PLEASE MOVE THESE FOLKS OUT OF THE WAY, MR. GRANDOURS. I NEED TO SPEAK TO THE **MAYOR**.

I THINK YOU NEED TO MAKE YOURSELF **SCARCE**, BIGBY.

THE MUNDY EMERGENCY RESPONSE PEOPLE WILL BE HERE SOON, IN FULL FORCE, AND THEY CAN'T FIND A **GIANT WOLF** WHEN THEY ARRIVE.

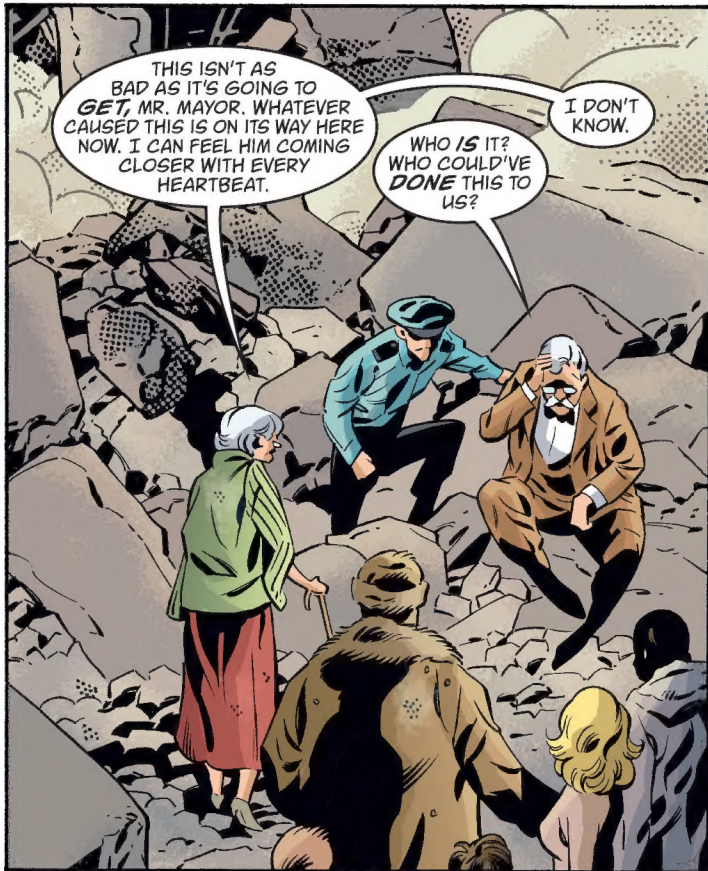
BETTER CHANGE BACK.

FINE ENOUGH, BUT GET READY TO SEE ME **STARKERS**, THEN, BEAUTY. MY CLOTHES BLEW AWAY SOMEWHERE.

:COUGH! COUGH!:

:COUGH! COUGH!:

:COUGH! COUGH!:



THIS ISN'T AS BAD AS IT'S GOING TO GET, MR. MAYOR. WHATEVER CAUSED THIS IS ON ITS WAY HERE NOW. I CAN FEEL HIM COMING CLOSER WITH EVERY HEARTBEAT.

WHO IS IT? WHO COULD'VE DONE THIS TO US?

I DON'T KNOW.



I CAN'T GET MUCH OF A SENSE OF HIM, EXCEPT THAT HE'S A DESTROYER. HE'S MORE POWERFUL THAN WE CAN HANDLE. AND HE'S ON HIS WAY.



WE NEED TO LEAVE.

LEAVE? WHERE?



THIS IS THE TIME, SIR.

LEAD US. WE'RE ALL WAITING TO FOLLOW YOU.

UHM... WELL...

...WHAT ABOUT THE FARM? HAS THAT BEEN HARMED, TOO?



NOT A BIT. EVERY SPELL THERE IS STILL INTACT. WE'VE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THE FARM ISN'T HIDDEN FROM MUNDY AND UNKNOWN ENEMY ALIKE.



THEN THAT'S WHAT WE HAVE TO DO. THAT'S WHERE WE'LL GO.

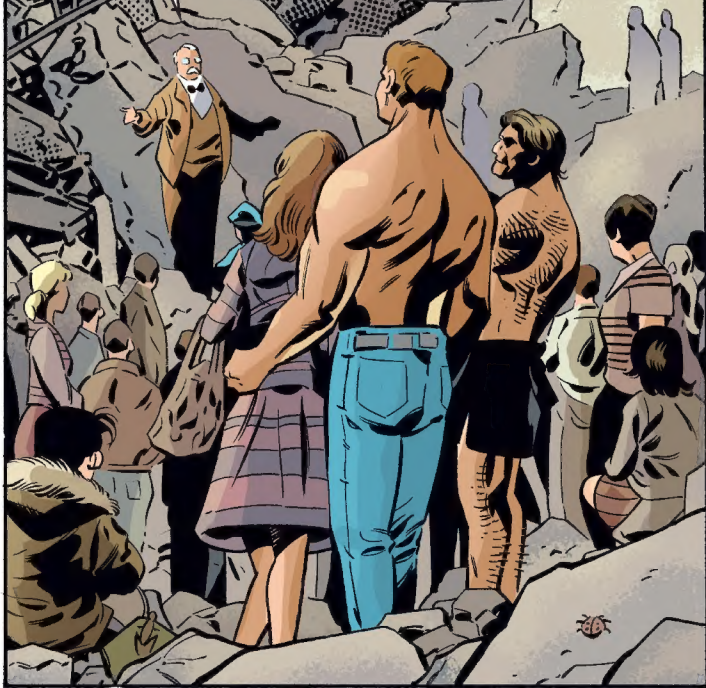
LISTEN UP, PEOPLE! THE WOODLAND IS GONE, AND THE REST OF FABLETOWN IS UNSAFE!

MORE DANGERS ARE ON THE WAY, AND WE NEED TO BE SOMEWHERE ELSE WHEN THEY GET HERE!



AND TO ADD TO OUR TROUBLES, THE MUNDY POLICE AND SUCH WILL BE HERE WITHIN MOMENTS!

OUR DEFLECTIVE SPELLS ARE GONE! THERE'S NOTHING TO KEEP THEM FROM DISCOVERING US AND THIS CATASTROPHE, AND THERE'S NO TIME TO WORK OUT ANY COVER STORIES!



SO I THINK IT BEST THAT WE SIMPLY BE GONE BEFORE THEY GET HERE! HERE'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO...

...THOSE OF YOU WITH CARS, GET THEM! THOSE WITH MUNDY COVER IDENTITIES, GO RENT ONE-- THE BIGGEST ONE YOU CAN GET. AND TAKE FOUR OF YOUR NEIGHBORS WITH YOU!



DO IT NOW! DON'T GO BACK INTO YOUR HOMES! TAKE ONLY WHAT YOU'VE GOT ON YOU!

DON'T TARRY TO LOOK FOR ANYTHING THAT MAY HAVE SURVIVED THE FALL! AND DON'T LEAVE ANYONE BEHIND!

AND GO WHERE, SIR? YOU DIDN'T SAY THAT YET.

OH, YES! WE'RE GOING TO THE FARM! WE'LL BE SAFE THERE, BUT WE NEED TO BE ON OUR WAY IN SECONDS, NOT MINUTES!

SO, GO! GET GOING! LEAVE NOW!

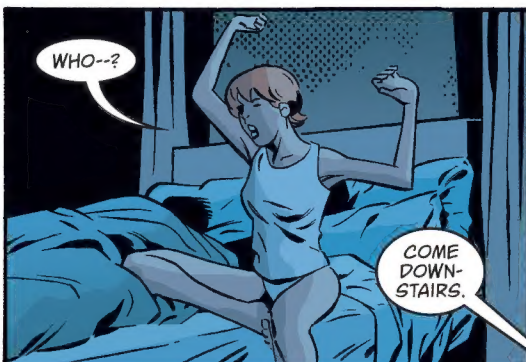




THE FARM.

HOURS LATER...

ROSE RED?
YOU HAVE TO WAKE UP, ROSE RED. THERE'S TROUBLE.



WHO--?

COME DOWNSTAIRS.



WHO IS THIS? I DON'T RECOGNIZE--

HURRY. I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.



WHAT THE FUCK--?!!

I THOUGHT I WAS ALL DONE, BUT THEY SENT ME BACK.

DO YOU REMEMBER ME, ROSE RED? MY NAME WAS COLIN. I USED TO LIVE HERE AT THE FARM.

YOU'RE
A BLOODY PIG
HEAD ON A
STICK!

AND
YOU'RE
DEAD! I
SAW YOU
DIE!

OF COURSE
I'M DEAD. I'D HATE TO
BE IN THIS CONDITION
AND NOT BE.

NOW, YOU'RE
GOING TO HAVE TO
CALM DOWN, BECAUSE
THEY NEVER GIVE ME
MUCH TIME.

I USED TO
VISIT YOUR *SISTER*
LIKE THIS, BACK WHEN
THINGS WERE BAD AND
IT WAS ALL GOING TO
LAND ON *HER*
SHOULDERS.

BUT
NOW IT FALLS
ON YOU.

EVERY-
THING. ALL THE
WEIGHT.

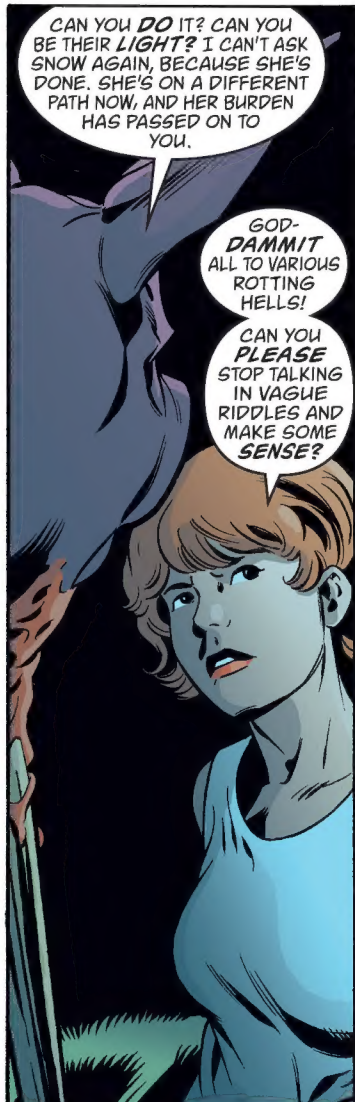
AND IT'S
MY TASK TO
WARN YOU-TO
GIVE YOU TIME TO
SUMMON UP THE
STRENGTH TO
FACE WHAT'S
COMING.

WARN ME
ABOUT *WHAT*?
WHAT THE HELL
ARE YOU TALKING
ABOUT?

THE BAD
TIMES ARE BACK--
PERHAPS WORSE THAN
EVER. DON'T YOU SEE?
THERE WAS *ALWAYS*
GOING TO BE A PRICE
FOR THE WITCHING
CLOAK, AND THE
WELL, AND THINGS
LIKE THAT.

YOU
HAD THEM FOR
CENTURIES, TO
USE AS YOU WOULD,
BUT NOW THE BILL'S
COME DUE.

AND SOON,
WHEN THE *DUST*
SETTLES, THEY'LL BE LOOK-
ING TO YOU, TO *GUIDE*
THEM THROUGH THE
DARKNESS.



CAN YOU **DO** IT? CAN YOU BE THEIR **LIGHT**? I CAN'T ASK SNOW AGAIN, BECAUSE SHE'S DONE. SHE'S ON A DIFFERENT PATH NOW, AND HER BURDEN HAS PASSED ON TO YOU.

GOD-DAMMIT ALL TO VARIOUS ROTTING HELLS!

CAN YOU **PLEASE** STOP TALKING IN VAGUE RIDDLES AND MAKE SOME **SENSE**?



I HAVE TO SAY, YOUR SISTER TREATED ME NICER.

FINE! I'LL TREAT YOU LIKE THE DAINY GODDAMN **QUEEN** OF DAINY GODDAMN **ENGLAND!** NOW, IF YOU'D JUST--

SORRY. I'M OUT OF TIME.



I'LL TRY TO COME BACK WHEN I CAN.

IF THEY LET ME.

WAIT!



YOU NEVER EXPLAINED ANYTHING.



SINBAD, GET UP. YOU HAVE TO GET DRESSED.

=NRRRMPH?<

UP NOW! JOIN ME DOWN-STAIRS!

"THEY TOLD ME SOMETHING BAD'S ON THE WAY."

WHO'S THIS ARRIVING AT SUCH AN HOUR?

I'M NOT SURE, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE EVERYONE.



SOMEWHERE IN THE ENDLESS UNIVERSE, MISTER DARK RIDES HIS WILD BLACK STEED NAMED HARBINGER, WHOSE STRIDE CROSSES WORLDS.

EVER CLOSER HE COMES TO HIS DESTINATION, AND THESE ARE THE SIGNS THAT PRESAGE HIS COMING...



IN FABLETOWN'S LOST BUSINESS OFFICE, THE WICKED WITCH BABA YAGA IS UNBOUND AND PROWLING THE BACK CORRIDORS. TENDING TO OLD HUNGERS IS FOREMOST ON HER MIND.

ON ONE OF THE OFFICE'S SECURE STORAGE SHELVES, A BOTTLE HAS COME OPEN AND ITS PREVIOUS OCCUPANT IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.



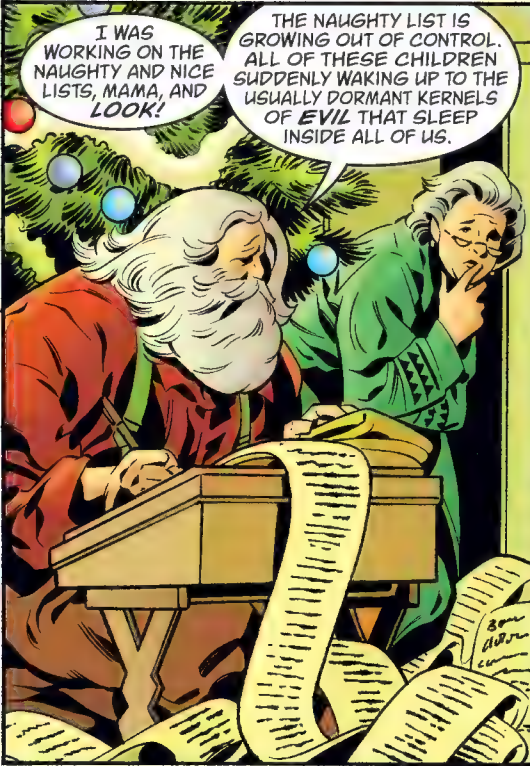
AND AT THE NORTH POLE...

PAPA, WHAT'S WRONG?



I WAS WORKING ON THE NAUGHTY AND NICE LISTS, MAMA, AND LOOK!

THE NAUGHTY LIST IS GROWING OUT OF CONTROL. ALL OF THESE CHILDREN SUDDENLY WAKING UP TO THE USUALLY DORMANT KERNELS OF EVIL THAT SLEEP INSIDE ALL OF US.



I'VE BEEN WRITING FOR HOURS AND *STILL* THE NAMES ARE COMING TO ME.



AND IN THEIR SLUMBERS THE WORLD OVER, CHILDREN WAKE IN THE NIGHT, KNOWING THAT SOMETHING IS ABOUT TO COME CRAWLING OUT FROM UNDER THE BED.

MR. BOGEY MAN?



BACK AT THE FARM...

FIRST THING, WE'LL NEED ALL OF THE WAR BUILDUP BROUGHT OUT OF STORAGE AND PITCHED TONIGHT. THEY'LL BE IN ONE OF THE BARNs.

GET A CREW ON THAT IMMEDIATELY. NO ONE SLEEPS UNTIL IT'S DONE.

AND NONE OF YOU THOUGHT TO CALL ME IN ADVANCE, TO WARN US YOU WERE COMING?

ONCE A CAR IS UNLOADED, PARK IT OUT IN THE WEST FIELD PASTURES! NOT EAST, IT'S TOO ROCKY AND NOT THE NORTH FIELDS. THOSE ARE CROPLANDS!

HOW WERE WE SUPPOSED TO WARN YOU, DEAR GIRL?

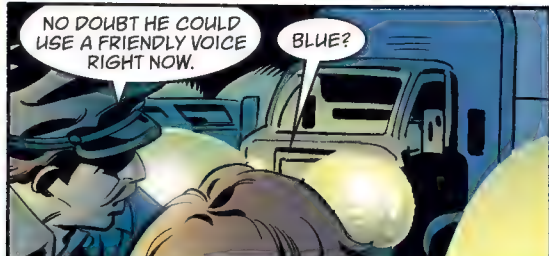
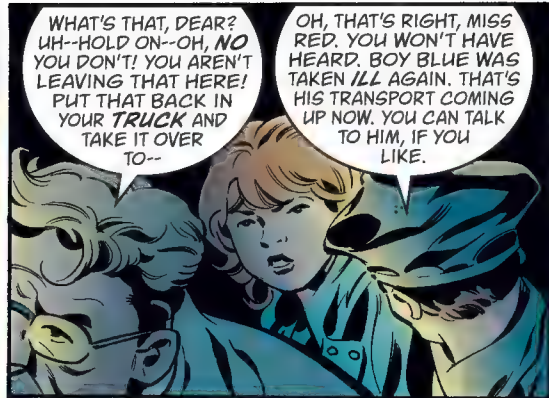
YOU WEREN'T ANSWERING YOUR CELL PHONE, AND THE DIRECT LINE BETWEEN THE FARM AND THE BUSINESS OFFICE WAS CUT WHEN WE LOST THE BUSINESS OFFICE.

WELL, WE GET HOLES IN OUR CELL COVERAGE UP HERE, BUT YOU STILL COULD HAVE EMAILED US, OR SOMETHING...

EMAIL? WHAT'S THAT, ROSE?--ER--EXCUSE ME. YES, GRIMBLE?

I SAID...

...WE'RE SETTING YOU UP IN THE MAIN HOUSE'S VIP GUEST SUITE, SIR.





BUT YOU WERE *FINE*. YOU CAME THROUGH THE WAR JUST FINE. WITH ONLY THAT ONE SCRATCH AND--

TURNS OUT THAT ONE MINOR SCRATCH WAS A DOOZY. BAD LUCK, EH?



I MUST *INSIST* YOU LET ME GET THE PATIENT INSIDE. THE DOCTOR EXPECTS HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO BE CARRIED OUT TO THE *LETTER*.

JUST ONE *SECOND*, YOU FAT, UGLY HARRY!

UH, HONEY? MAYBE YOU'D BETTER LET THEM DO WHAT THEY NEED TO DO.



HONEY? IT SEEMS YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE BEHIND ON THE LATEST NEWS. WHAT DID I MISS?



OH NO, NOT LIKE THIS. I DIDN'T WANT TO TELL YOU LIKE THIS.



ROSE RED AND I WERE MARRIED A BIT MORE THAN A WEEK AGO. UHM--WE WERE STILL DISCUSSING THE RIGHT WAY TO TELL YOU.

OH, AH, THEN *THAT* EXPLAINS IT. YOU HAVE MY *FULLEST* CONGRATULATIONS, OF COURSE. WELL DONE. SHE *ALWAYS* DESERVED THE BEST.

I'D SHAKE YOUR HAND, BUT THE ONLY ONE LEFT IS FULL OF TUBES JUST NOW.

IF YOU TWO DON'T MIND, I THINK I'D BETTER BE TAKEN INSIDE NOW.

NURSE?

BIGBY, THIS CAN'T HAPPEN--NOT TO HIM. WE CAN'T LOSE THE BOY. WHAT HAVEN'T WE TRIED YET?

THE DOCTOR IS OUT OF IDEAS. TOTENKINDER AND THE OTHER SORCERERS SAY THERE'S NOTHING LEFT THEY CAN TRY, EITHER.

I THINK OUR BEST BET IS WITH FLYCATCHER, WHENEVER HE SHOWS UP AGAIN. HE'S PRETTY POWERFUL NOW. MAYBE HE HAS A LAST MIRACLE UP HIS SLEEVE.

BUT, WITHOUT ACCESS TO THE BUSINESS OFFICE AND THE WITCHING CLOAK, WE'VE NO QUICK WAY TO CONTACT HIM.

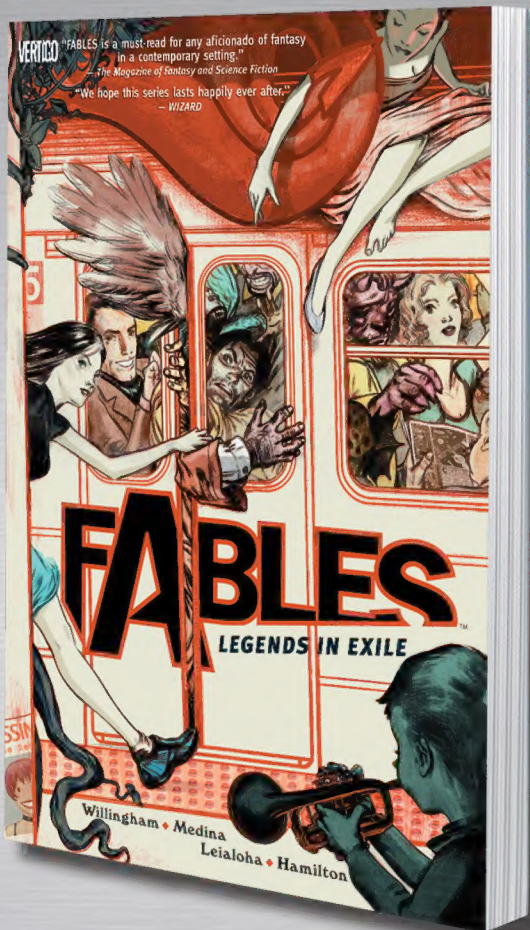
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BILL WILLINGHAM

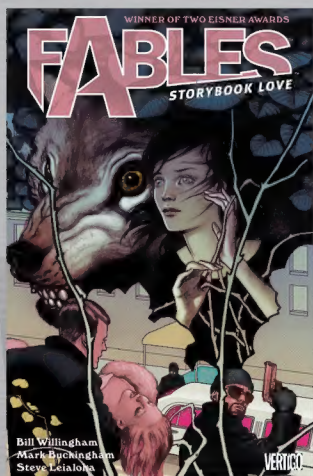
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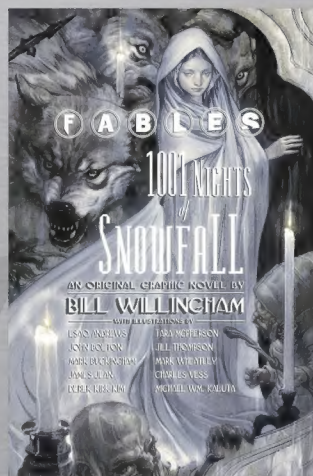
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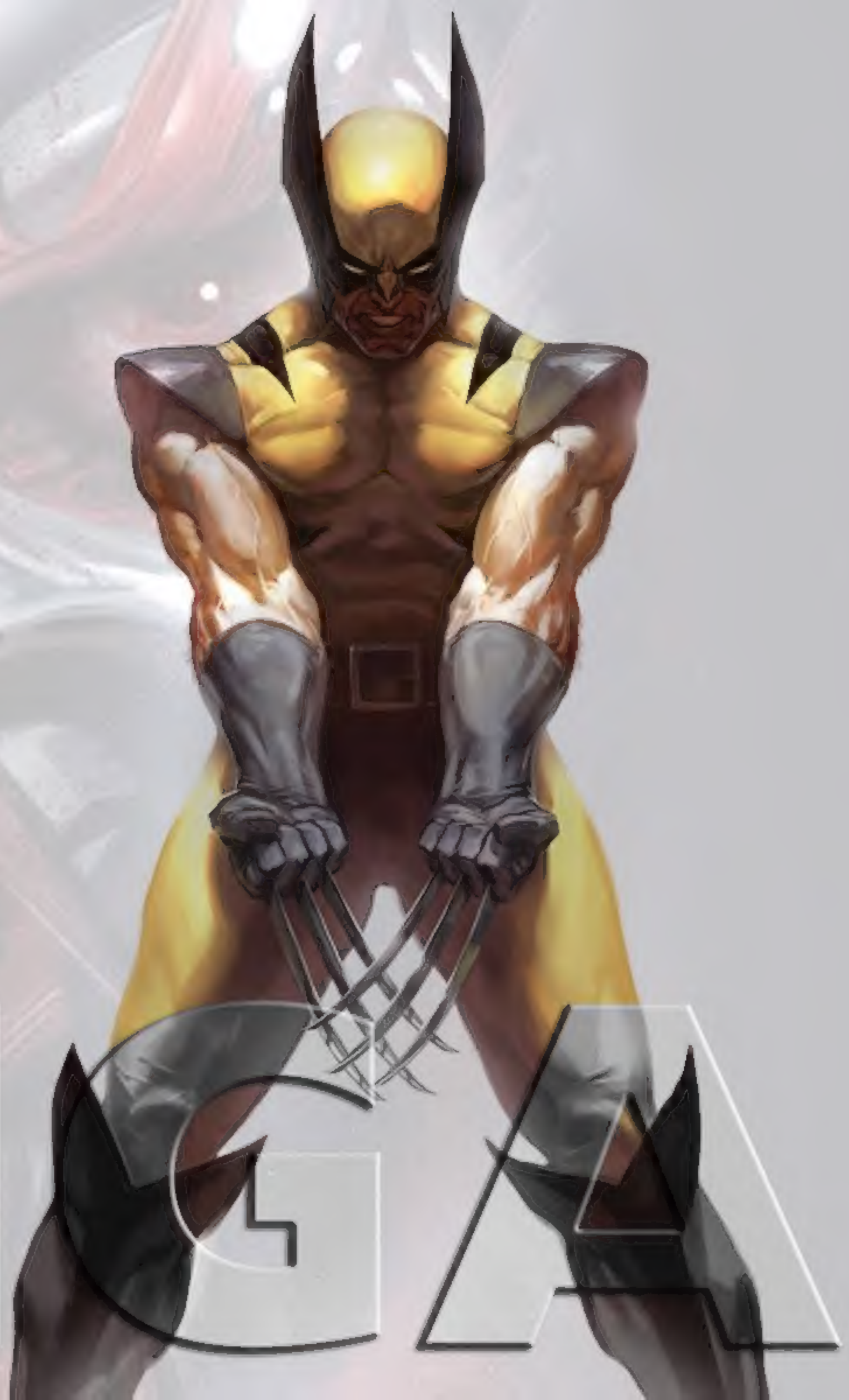


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1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



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